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ABSTRACT

Considering that the field of American early childhood education and care is at the brink of a major shift in how it views its mission, this paper provides policymakers with ways to help understand the emergent situation, to define excellence in early education and care, and to plan a strategy to improve provision of services. A glance toward the past indicates dimensions of the changing climate in the field, focusing on the history of fragmentation among programs with limited scope, antecedents of the perceptual shift regarding the field, and, briefly, the need for broad agreement on how to reorganize the delivery system. A first step toward developing a preliminary concensus proposes three elements of a definition of excellence in early education and care: (1) the production of high quality programming that takes into account research findings on and between behavioral and environmental variables; (2) the clarification of equality in the context of early childhood programs; and (3) the development of an integrated system to obtain efficiencies of operation and economies of scale. A second step, from fragmented delivery systems toward a system providing comprehensive, improved services, offers three strategies for change. Strategies contrast thinking in terms of a program model, particulars, and the short-term, with planning more systemically, universally, and for the long haul. Fifty-seven references are cited. (RH)

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POLICY PERSPECTIVES

Excellence in Early Childhood Education:

Defining Characteristics and Next-Decade Strategies

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POLICY PERSPECTIVES

Excellence in Early Childhood Education: Defining Characteristics and Next-Decade Strategies

Sharon L. Kagan

U.S. Department of Education
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July 1990

Policy Perspectives Series

Workplace Competencies: The Need to Improve Literacy and Employment Readiness

Excellence in Early Childhood Education: Defining Characteristics and Next-Decade Strategies

Increasing Achievement of At-Risk Students at Each Grade Level

Accountability: Implications for State and Local Policymakers

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Foreword

At all levels of government, education policymakers are confronting immense problems that cry out urgently for solutions. These men and women—legislators, governors, mayors, school officials, and even the President of the United States—generally agree that our schools cannot be left to operate unaltered, and that the need for reform is widespread and immediate.

Policymakers know, for example, that the growing demand for early education is forcing a crisis in that field and that educators of young children now grapple with demands that are straining their resources and compelling them to redefine their mission. They listen as employers loudly lament the quality of high school graduates, while investing millions of corporate dollars in programs that teach basic skills and workplace competencies to their newest workers. And they search diligently for programs and practices that can reverse our alarming failure to bolster the achievement levels of at-risk students.

But if the problems are numerous and compelling, there is no shortage of proposed solutions. Currently, one of the most favored reform strategies calls for implementing accountability measures that would more clearly define and assess who is responsible for student success and student failure. Thus, while the number of programs, suggestions, proposals, and techniques for dealing with such specific issues as literacy or achievement levels among at-risk youngsters is mind-boggling, many of these approaches now contain one or more strategies for holding schools accountable for student learning.

Given the intensity of the school reform debate and the abundance of ideas for remedying the Nation's educational ills, it is not surprising that many policymakers often find themselves adrift in a sea of uncollated and frequently conflicting information that does little to inform decision-making.

In an effort to alleviate this situation and to inform the education debate, the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) decided last year to commission a series of papers to address those topics that policymakers themselves told us were most pressing.

We began by surveying the major policymaking organizations and asking them to identify which school-related issues they viewed as compelling. There was remarkable agreement in the field, and it did not take very long to identify those areas most in need of illumination. We learned, for example, that policymakers are concerned about improving literacy levels and about graduating young people who are prepared to function effectively in the modern workplace. We discovered that they are seeking strategies to combat the growing crisis in early childhood education and to raise achievement levels among at-risk students. And we found that there is a need to clarify the issues surrounding educational accountability, so that intelligent decisions can be made about how best to hold schools answerable for their performance.

Thus advised, we sought the most distinguished scholars we could find to address significant aspects of these issues, and we succeeded in assembling a roster of individuals whose expertise on these subjects is unchallengeable. Indeed, I am most grateful to Sharon L. Kagan, associate director of The Bush Center in Child Development and Social Policy at Yale University, for this thoughtful and provocative examination of early care and education.

I am also indebted to:

- Paul E. Barton, director of the Educational Testing Service's (ETS) Policy Information Center, and Irwin S. Kirsch, research director for ETS' Division of Cognitive and Assessment Research, for their paper on *Workplace Competencies: The Need to Improve Literacy and Employment Readiness;*
- Michael W. Kirst, professor of education and business administration at Stanford University, for his paper on *Accountability: Implications for State and Local Policymakers,* and
- James M. McPartland, co-director of the Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools, Johns Hopkins University, and Robert E. Slavin, director of the Elementary School Program for the Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools, and co-director of the Early and Elementary School Program of the Center for Research on Effective Schooling of Disadvantaged Students, Johns Hopkins University, for their paper on *Increasing Achievement of At-Risk Students at Each Grade Level.*

We asked that all the authors approach the subjects within a common framework and bring to bear their distinctive perspectives on these important issues. Specifically, we requested that they do four things:

- Describe the issue or problem being addressed;
- Discuss briefly pertinent research on the topic;
- Describe what States and/or other concerned interest groups are doing about the issue, and
- Analyze the implications of current activity—and inactivity—for policymakers at the Federal, State, and/or local levels.

Then, to ensure that this paper—and the others in this "Policy Perspectives" series—would, in fact, be valuable to the community of policymakers, we invited all of the scholars to participate in a one-day meeting where they could present their draft findings at a public forum and then engage in small group discussions that provided a unique opportunity for face-to-face peer review sessions. Both authors and reviewers were overwhelmingly enthusiastic about this process, and all of the papers were revised to reflect the feedback offered.

I want to stress, in conclusion, that it is *not* the purpose of this series to supply easy answers or quick-fix solutions to the complex problems confronting American education today. We did not start out to develop a set of blueprints with step-by-step instructions for implementing reform. Rather, we are seeking to promote the dissemination of knowledge in a format we hope will provide policymakers everywhere with new insights and fresh ideas that will inform their decision-making and translate into strategies that will revitalize the ways in which we run our schools and teach our students.

Christopher T. Cross
Assistant Secretary
Office of Educational Research
and Improvement

Acknowledgments

Information Services' "Policy Perspectives" series is one response to OERI's Congressionally mandated mission to "improve the dissemination and application of knowledge, obtained through educational research and data gathering, particularly to education professionals and policymakers." To launch the series, we invited some of the Nation's most renowned scholars to produce papers addressing those issues that policymakers told us were most pressing. This report is but one by-product of the undertaking.

Many people contributed to the success of this project. I would especially like to thank Sharon L. Kagan of the Yale Bush Center in Child Development and Social Policy for consenting to produce this paper, *Excellence in Early Childhood Education: Defining Characteristics and Next-Decade Strategies.* I am also grateful to those members of the policymaking community who agreed to review and comment on an early draft of this document. They are: Barbara Willer, National Association for the Education of Young Children; Tom Schultz, National Association of State Boards of Education; Nicholas Zill, Child Trends; James Joy, Winand Elementary School, Baltimore (representing the National Association of Elementary School Principals); and Esther Kresh, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

I am grateful to all of you.

Sharon Kinney Horn
Director
Information Services

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Introduction

A recent volume chronicling the nature of preschool education in three cultures suggests that preschools have been more a force for cultural continuity than for cultural change (Tobin, Wu, and Davidson, 1989). The study concludes that preschool education in China and Japan has been externally congruent with each country's overarching mission of education, and consequently, has remained fairly consistent over time. In contrast, preschool education in the United States has changed direction frequently, reflecting our national ambiguity regarding the purpose of education in general, and the disjunction of purpose between child care and early education, specifically. Concurring with the above thesis, I suggest in this paper that American early childhood education (like education in general) is at the brink of a major shift in how it conceptualizes and defines its mission. Linking care and education, such redefinition affords promising options and opportunities. Following an analysis that delineates this change, the paper offers a new definition of excellence in early care and education and suggests strategies for achieving it.

The Changing Zeitgeist in Education and in Early Childhood Education

Alternately praised and criticized, the President's September 1989 Education Summit legitimized the groundswell for change that had been brewing in educational circles for a good half decade. With its emphasis on setting national goals and a commitment to early intervention, the summit boldly reminded our Nation of the inextricable link between societal and educational concerns. America was put on notice that "reading, 'riting and 'rithmetic" are not the sole ends of education: a fourth *"R"* was added to the litany—namely, *r*eadying children to function optimally in an increasingly stressful and technologically sophisticated society. In so doing, the summit endorsed a place for social, emotional, and functional competence, alongside cognitive competence, as goals for education. Further, preventing problems before they begin, working with young children, supporting families in their complex roles, and collaborating with other community institutions were applauded as appropriate educational strategies. Such visions not only reflect an educational enterprise in flux, but changing attitudes toward the care and education of young children in our country.

With so much attention being accorded to young children now, it is important to note that barely a half century ago, day care and early education were seen, first, as nonessentials, and, second, as distinct entities with very different functions. Day care, established as a social service for working or indigent parents, was essentially a child of the welfare system. Often considered custodial, day care was thought to be of inferior quality when compared with programs serving comparably aged children in the private sector. Private-sector programs, largely fee-for-service, were crafted to serve the needs of middle-class America; they were to rescue children and parents from suburban isolation by providing socialization opportunities for both. As our social conscience grew, Federal- and State-supported preschool programs emerged to help children and families overcome the negative effects of poverty. Manifest in Project Head Start, Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and a limited number of State initiatives, these efforts, largely part day in length, attempted to meet children's cognitive, social, emotional, and physical needs, and often encouraged a significant role for parents.

Since these programs emerged from such different historical traditions, it is not at all surprising that they differed on nearly every major variable: staffing, funding, guidelines, and even the array of services offered. Less understandable is the degree to which even regulatable characteristics varied: ratios, group size, teacher or caregiver preparation. And most important, the troublesome legacies of such dramatic differences remain enigmatic.

Accounting for the situation, one interpretation suggests that lacking any overarching vision or policy, child care and early education grew like Topsy, yielding a nonsystem characterized by competition and fragmentation (Kagan, 1989; Scarr & Weinberg, 1986). Without a unified vision, a single agency at the Federal level, or any incentives to collaborate, individual programs bred and clung tenaciously to their own values and guidelines. A political climate in which funding was limited and program survival precarious exacerbated competition, forcing each program to focus on preserving its own existence. Consequently, programs were never seen as components of a broader whole. Rather, they were independent entities, each fighting for survival. And even when programs were linked for a particular project, they rarely coalesced in spirit or in duration. Thus, early care and education services evolved as little more than a polyglot array of disjointed programs.

In spite of this legacy, early care and education is on the verge of dramatic change for several important reasons. Widely cited demographics document changes in American family life that have propelled more women into the work force, creating the need for more early care and education services (Children's Defense Fund, 1988; Rosewater, 1989). America's massive welfare reform effort, the Family Support Act of 1988, will also push low-income and unemployed women into training programs and work, and their children into child care. Escalating numbers of pregnant teenagers, "crack" infants born addicted to drugs, and single-parent families are increasing the need for parenting intervention and family support programs, two services closely aligned with early care and education. In short, social need is one potent force accelerating change in early care and education.

Beyond need, widely popularized research findings bespeak the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of early intervention for low-income children, leaving little doubt of its personal and societal value (Berrueta-Clement, Schweinhart, Barnett, Epstein & Weikart, 1984; Lazar & Darlington, 1982). Research has led those working in the field, regardless of auspices, to agree that quality of nonfamilial care and education for all chil-

dren is most closely tied to (1) the nature of the relationship between the caregiver and the child; (2) the nature of the environment; and (3) the nature of the relationship between the caregiver and the parent. Under the leadership of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the professional association representing the field, quality has been codified in a single volume, *Developmentally Appropriate Practices* (DAP) (Bredekamp, 1987). Serving as a pedagogical and policy guide, DAP is being written into legislation at the State and Federal levels, and is being adopted in several foreign countries.

If rapidly accelerating need and the proven effectiveness of early intervention programs for low-income children have amplified the attention accorded early care and education, another force—business and political endorsement—has propelled it to unprecedented heights. Corporate America, concerned about its present and future work force, has broadened its interest not only in schools but in child care and early education. Roughly 3,500 of the Nation's 6 million employers offer their employees some form of child care assistance (Child Care Action Campaign, 1988), and many corporations are establishing foundations or corporate-giving strategies that accord priority to early care and education. In the political domain, elected representatives in most States and at the Federal level have considered legislation to increase services to young children and their families: 32 States have actually made commitments to some form of preschool service (Mitchell, Seligson, & Marx, 1989), and the Congress is considering passage of comprehensive child care legislation.

Just as a consensus is emerging regarding the mission and goals of education in general, agreement is rapidly coalescing regarding early care and education programs. No longer seen as subordinate in purpose or importance to education in general or to each other, child care and early education programs, it is generally agreed, are pedagogically similar and should not be separated conceptually. While recognizing that most preschool-aged youngsters are cared for in their homes, there is growing acceptance that children in out-of-home settings, whether these settings are labeled care or education, must receive high-quality services that meet developmental, social, emotional, physical and cognitive needs. Furthermore, because of the importance of family to healthy child development, young children receiving out-of-home services must be understood and served within the context of their family and community.

Despite rhetorical consensus regarding quality and pedagogy, there is little agreement over strategy—how best to accomplish these ends. Again, like education in general, early care and education is faced with the chal-

lenge of converting conceptual visions to concrete definitions and practical strategies.

Defining Excellence in Early Care and Education: The First Step

It is an odd paradox that though much energy has been expended on defining and implementing "excellence" in education, comparatively little mention has been made of "excellence" in early care and education. Educators of young children are certainly familiar with *A Nation at Risk*, the 1983 report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education, as well as with the many scholarly treatises on excellence. Nevertheless, though they are well aware of the import of the excellence movement in education, they have not been engulfed by the concept of excellence.

Rather, debates have revolved around defining and researching what may be an equivalent concept: "quality." Like excellence, quality embraces both the process and the outcome of education. For early educators, quality of process means devoting attention to strategies, curricula, and environmental elements. Quality of outcome means focusing multidimensionally on the impact early intervention has on youngsters' social, emotional and cognitive competence, as well as on their families. Without doubt, quality has been and will remain a legitimate goal for early care and education programs, perhaps the most important goal.

But quality, as the early childhood profession has conventionally defined it, cannot be the only goal. Certainly, early childhood programs must continue to serve individual children and their families. However, given a changing national Zeitgeist that demands expanded services, the field's history of segregated services for children, inequitable compensation for providers, and programmatic inequities and fragmentation, current efforts must be directed to a higher standard of excellence, one that meets broader societal goals and transcends individual programs. Such a standard must embrace programmatic *quality* and commitments to *equality* and *integrity*. These three components of excellence in early care and education are like the legs of a tripod: no one can stand alone. Only the three together can bring the requisite stability and support.

Quality: The Critical Component

Correlates of quality in early care and education have been well researched and documented. They fall, for purposes of this discussion, into three general categories: (1) findings associated with environmental variables; (2) findings associated with children's behaviors; and (3) findings associated with the interaction of environment and children's behaviors.

When discussing environmental variables in programs for young children, scholars are concerned with far more than the physical properties of the setting, though these are surely important. The nature, amount, and use of space and materials all affect the child's experience (Prescott, 1981; Smith & Connolly, 1980). But environment is also shaped by ratios, group size, stability of caregivers, curriculum, and the involvement of parents. Studies indicate that keeping groups small so that ample opportunity exists for adult-child interactions leads to less aggressive behavior, greater involvement, and more cooperation among children (Ruopp, Travers, Glantz & Coelen, 1979; Clarke-Stewart & Gruber, 1984; Howes, 1983; Francis & Self, 1982). Strong, supportive child-adult interactions, in turn, contribute to children's social and intellectual competence (McCartney, 1984; McCartney, Scarr, Phillips, Grajek, & Schwartz, 1982). We also know that a planned, sequenced, and developmentally appropriate program with a balance of child-initiated and teacher-directed activities enhances children's learning (Karnes, Schwedel, & Williams, 1983; Schweinhart, Weikart, & Larner, 1986; Bredekamp, 1987). Active involvement of parents is also related to lasting effects of high-quality programs (Galinsky & Hooks, 1977; Lally, 1987; Ramey & Haskins, 1981).

Findings associated with children's behavior repeatedly endorse the need for child play as the key to successful outcomes. Lieberman (1977) found correlations between play and the results of standardized intelligence test scores, and Sylva, Bruner, and Genova (1976) pointed out improvements in problem-solving ability, academic skills, and attitudes. Play leads to more complex and sophisticated behavior (Saracho, 1986) and to improved memory (Saltz, Dixon, & Johnson, 1977) and language development (Levy, Schaefer, & Phelps, 1986).

While quality is certainly not restricted to any single curriculum model, recent research attests to the efficacy of developmentally appropriate practices that integrate environmental and child action variables. When curricula embrace developmentally appropriate practices (and many do), gains for children accrue. For example, when comparing children who had been in an academically enriched program with youngsters in developmentally

appropriate programs, children in the former group were more anxious, less creative, and had less positive attitudes toward school than those in the latter group. Although youngsters in the academically enriched program had a slight advantage on ability tests when tested at age 4, that advantage disappeared a year later when the children went on to kindergarten (Hirsh-Pasek & Cone, 1989).

Yet, despite these potent research findings and documented practices, teachers throughout the country report having great difficulty implementing high-quality, developmentally appropriate programs. In kindergartens, more structured programs are the norm. In a California study, for example, Smith (1987) reported that, in more than 400 kindergartens, workbooks and worksheets were used more frequently than any other activity. And even though teachers were concerned about the negative consequences of such inefficient strategies, 62 percent indicated that they would continue these practices. In an Ohio study, Hatch and Freeman (1988) found that 67 percent of the teachers questioned felt that what they did each day conflicted with their beliefs about what children need in kindergarten. And a wide range of quality and appropriateness was found in a study of North Carolina kindergartens, with 60 percent of the observed classrooms falling well below the researchers' criterion of quality, 20 percent near it, and only 20 percent meeting it (Bryant, Clifford, & Peisner, 1989).

The distance between what constitutes quality and what is implemented in classrooms throughout the Nation is troublesome. Pinpointing a single cause for this gap is not easy, but one factor may be pressure by parents for academic "achievement" at too early an age. Fast-track parents raising fast-track children (a.k.a. "gourmet babies" or "cornucopia kids") want "results," as do low-income families who see educational success as one escape from poverty. Worried parents, concerned about the prevalence of child abuse, drug dependence, and television overdosing, overprogram their children, robbing them of the "leisure to think their own thoughts, an essential element in the development of creativity" (Bettleheim, 1988). Such nonschool-based pressure is translated into demands for more structured curricula and activities within the classroom.

Beyond these external forces, others internal to the profession—the national mania for accountability, the drive for higher test results, and the readiness to retain young children—have accelerated more structured and academically oriented early childhood classes. Well documented elsewhere, the consequences of such practices wreak havoc with young children (Meisels, 1989; Smith & Shepard, 1987). Major professional organizations, including the National Association for the Education of Young Children

and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education, have adopted formal positions against such strategies, and the National Academy of Sciences Forum on the Future of Children and Families launched a panel to address the issue. Nevertheless, overtesting with its negative consequences for young children continues unabated in early childhood programs.

But parental pressures and selected school practices are not the only factors inhibiting implementation of quality programs for young children. Two cost-based factors enter the picture also. First, because salaries and benefits for early childhood personnel are so low, current workers regularly seek employment options elsewhere, and new people are not attracted to the field. Turnover is estimated to average about 41 percent nationally (Whitebook, Howes, & Phillips, 1989), and directors report the recruitment of qualified staff as their number one problem. High turnover and its corollary, diminished staff quality, compromise program effectiveness in several dimensions. For young children who are the most vulnerable and most dependent on consistent, secure relationships, short-term attachments, particularly among the all-important adults in their lives, are difficult to comprehend and tolerate.

Challenging for children, turnover is also problematic in maintaining curricular and pedagogical quality. Heavy turnover means that many more new child care teachers are staffing classes. Inexperience among neophytes naturally makes them insecure, fostering dependence on prescribed activities and formal curricula. Couple these insecurities with the press for institutional conformity encountered by kindergarten teachers, and it is not difficult to understand why curricular spontaneity, individuality, and quality have been compromised.

The second cost factor inhibiting quality is the discrepancy between the amount of funding early care and education programs require and what they actually receive. The highly successful and widely touted Perry Preschool Program was estimated to cost $4,818 per child per year in 1981 dollars (Berrueta-Clement et al., 1984). If one assumes that, given inflation, the cost has doubled in 8 to 9 years, a comparable program would cost about $9,600 in 1990. And though that amount of money may not be needed for all preschool efforts, still it is a far cry from current average expenditures of about $3,000 per child per year for child care programs (Child Care Action Campaign, 1988). Further, it varies greatly from the recent U.S. General Accounting Office study (1989) indicating average expenditures in high-quality programs were about $4,660, including in-kind services. While parents, politicians, and the media predicate their

calls for more early intervention programs on the results achieved by costly efforts, funding at commensurate levels is absent. America *over*expects robust results from programs it consistently *under*funds.

The cost-quality dilemma permeates all debates regarding early care and education policy and practice. Without sufficient funding, staff turnover will escalate, and results for children and families are sure to be compromised. Resolution of the cost-quality problem, though apparently distant, revolves on two questions: (1) who should be responsible for paying for early care and education services, and (2) what should such services embrace? Once these herculean questions are answered and services appropriately funded, the quality component of excellence will be more readily achieved.

Equality: The Neglected Component

Our national interest in equality of educational opportunity has a long history that predates America's recent commitment to young children. Constitutional provisions, court decisions, legislative actions, and administrative mandates have all affirmed national commitments to equal access and equal justice in our society and in our schools. Concerned about assimilating "new immigrants" (Cubberley, 1909) and according opportunity to minorities (Gordon, 1961), generations of scholars and practitioners have looked to schools as societal equalizers. Liberal and progressive philosophers created a climate of concern for greater access and service (Cremin, 1961). And the Supreme Court sought to assure greater integration in the historic *Brown* v. *Board of Education* decision.

While revisionist historians debate the effects of these efforts, Gordon and Yeakey (1983) suggest that such legal expressions have asserted the right to equality, but have not ensured it. No description more aptly reflects the situation in early care and education. Rhetorically, practitioners in the field have loudly announced their commitment to early intervention as a means of reducing social alienation and enhancing opportunity among youngsters from low-income families. Head Start, the Nation's premier program for young children, was grounded in just such a commitment to improve social competence and eradicate the deficits imposed on those beginning life in poverty.

But there were difficulties with the widely hailed deficit strategies that framed intervention efforts of the 1960s. By their very design, such programs were constructed to acculturate poor children to middle-class norms and values, thereby discrediting the strengths inherent in their own cul-

ture. Additionally, because the programs were targeted to those most in need and were open only to those who met specific financial eligibility requirements, a permanent two-tier system that segregated the poor was legitimized. Though presumably well intentioned, our social strategy effectively sanctioned economic segregation for preschoolers by sending youngsters from middle- and upper-income families to fee-for-service programs and children from low-income families to subsidized programs. Worse, economic segregation often led to racial segregation, belying the law of the land and diminishing opportunities for equality and excellence for all children.

Beyond equality for the children themselves, early care and education is also plagued by a lack of programmatic equality. Since there are no consistent Federal standards for child care, in spite of repeated attempts to establish them (Nelson, 1982), multiple standards have been established throughout the Nation. Head Start has its performance standards, several national for-profit chains have developed their own means of "quality control," and NAEYC has established the Center Accreditation Program, which serves as an index of quality across systems.

Standards exist at the State level, but they vary widely from State to State not only in the thresholds established but in the areas that are regulated. Even more problematic are the variations in regulations that exist within a single geographic locale. In some municipalities, schools and churches are exempt from licensure, while day care centers must meet burdensome and often costly regulatory standards. As a result, the more highly regulated child care centers often face more difficulty in launching and sustaining programs than do church- or school-based programs. Advocates argue that consistent regulations should apply in all settings: what is safeguarded for one child should be safeguarded for all. Nevertheless, in spite of pleas for regulatory equity among programs, little exists.

The complex problem of equity, shared by early care and education and education in general, relates to their joint task of defining what constitutes equality and then determining how to allocate finite resources to achieve it. The questions to be answered are twofold: Is equality a constant or may it vary so as to achieve equity? And given limited resources, should dollars be spent on children in targeted programs, thereby increasing segregation of the needy? Or should limited dollars be spent on universal services for all, thereby fostering integration and generating broader based political appeal? Defining what we mean by equality—targeted or universal service delivery—and describing how best to achieve it are persistent issues that demand our attention.

Integrity: The Unconsidered Component

The words *integrity* and *integrate*, not coincidentally, share a common Latin root: both refer to making whole or making sound, to linking disparate parts into an unimpaired condition. We speak of the "integrity of a ship's hull" or an "integrated plot" or "integrated personality." The word *integrity* can also connote a qualitative dimension, suggesting adherence to moral and ethical principles.

While early care and education has been long on the latter definition of integrity (adherence to moral and ethical principles), it has been short on the former (linking disparate parts). The fragmented history discussed earlier set the course for the mix of programs and services embraced by the term early care and education. But this legacy of separation has been reinforced by our Nation's episodic commitment and nonsystematic approach to children's policy (Steiner, 1981). Lacking an integrated scheme or vision, children's policy is an amalgam of separate children's programs that have been funded with little understanding or recognition of the whole. This situation is akin to strengthening an umbrella by randomly adding spokes without noticing that its linking mechanism, the fabric, makes the umbrella function. In short, early care and education has many spokes, but lacks the fabric of coordination.

Historically, such lack of coordination has militated against efficiencies of operation and economies of scale. For example, in spite of large numbers of eligible children not receiving services, Head Start and State preschool programs often compete for youngsters (Goodman & Brady, 1988). Why? One frequently offered explanation is that the lack of comprehensive communitywide data and of coordination in siting new services encourages different sponsors to locate programs in exactly the same pockets of high need. Because program sponsors do not communicate with each other before opening programs, services are "stacked" in high-need areas. The result is that program slots outnumber eligible children, providers compete for youngsters, and valuable slots often go unused.

But such inefficiency does not end with children: programs routinely compete for staff. Rather than coming together for joint recruitment or training, each program feels compelled to launch its own separate (and costly) efforts. Rather than coordinate to realize economies of bulk buying, hundreds of child care programs in a given community purchase goods and services independently. Not advocating the merging of programs or their consolidation under one auspice and fully respecting the need for program diversity, calls for coordination simply suggest that some program

functions may be more effectively carried out collectively than individually. Such a strategy seeks to allow programs to maintain the benefits of independence while expediting those functions that overlap and/or cause inefficiencies among programs.

In spite of perceived benefits and the reduction of "systemic pain," such coordination is rare. The nonsystem survives. And within the subsidized sector, it has been perpetuated by government policy that has discouraged coordination. With funding threatened for violating regulations that prohibit contamination with other programs, federally supported early care and education programs, begun as separate entities, remained isolated for decades. A few innovative programs have skirted regulation to link funds so that services for children could be expedited. But this is the rare exception, not the accepted rule.

This ethos of separatism not only has affected routine functioning but has severely constrained the field's ability to think, vision, or act as a whole. When threats to Head Start surfaced, for example, the only practitioners who worked to counter them were from the Head Start community; they were not joined by school people or child care advocates. Similarly, when child care initiatives were debated, other service providers looked on at "arm's length." The legacy of programmatic fragmentation has left the profession bereft of policy integrity and policy capacity. Like the vicious cycle, uncoordinated advocacy has begotten more isolated programs which, in turn, have led to greater programmatic isolation.

And if matters were not complicated enough, the advent of increased attention to early care and education has exacerbated the situation. Although the prospect of more dollars might seem likely to ease tensions, it has only intensified the historic acrimony and pitted program against program. Given that new programs could be housed in a variety of settings, including schools, child care centers, and Head Start sites, and given the lack of data attesting to the superiority of any one sponsor over another, policymakers are justifiably confused. At the Federal and State levels, they debate the comparative merits of lodging new programs in human service or educational agencies. Advocates offer little solace, supporting their own individual choices.

Expansion of the sort now being considered poses tremendous operational challenges in such a fragmented system. Large numbers of new professionals are going to be needed. But in a field where programs already compete fiercely for qualified personnel and turnover is so high, the likelihood of expanded programs acquiring an adequate work force (much less doing so without causing pain to colleagues) is low. The need for

space and settings tailored to the special needs of young children will also increase. Further, programs that have been housed for decades in leased settings, particularly the schools, are being forced to relocate so that districts can make room for their "own" newly funded programs.

Beyond hurdling operational difficulties, competition for new programs is keen because the stakes are so very high. Not only will the victorious sponsor end up with sizeable increases in financial support, but in all likelihood, the victor will set licensing requirements and professional standards that will influence salaries and practices for years. In effect, nothing less than the future direction of the field is at stake.

Like the other components of excellence—quality and equality—integrity presents its own conundrums. On the one hand, the long history of competition among providers has rendered the field's policy structure impervious to integration. On the other, theoretical and practical paradigms have shifted: new commitments to serving the whole child in the context of family and community bespeak a need to integrate services and policies. How to reconcile current needs and thinking with an arcane but historically entrenched policy apparatus is the challenge.

Planning a Strategy for Excellence: The Second Step

Three linked strategies address the above problems and offer hope that the profession can move from well-intentioned, piecemeal programs to comprehensive services that reach new standards of excellence in early care and education. These include (1) moving from "programs to systems" models; (2) moving from a particularistic to universal vision; and (3) moving from short- to long-term commitments.

Moving from a "Program" to a "System" Model

Lacking sufficient support and resources to institute programs and services for all preschool-aged youngsters, the Nation, supported by generous foundation efforts, sought to establish program models from which lessons could be deduced. In retrospect, this "program models" approach has been a mixed blessing.

On the positive side, this approach has allowed the field to experiment. In effect, Donald Campbell's concept of the experimenting society took root in early care and education. Because no single model or strategy existed, different programs with different goals emerged, enabling researchers to investigate what programs were most effective under what conditions. Certainly, our boldest experiment, Head Start and its related programs (Parent and Child Centers, Home Start, Health Start, Project Developmental Continuity) were subjected to rigorous analyses over the decades. In fact, the abundant experimentation and reconceptualization led Zigler (1979) to entitle his chapter in a definitive volume on Head Start "Head Start: Not a Program But an Evolving Concept." Besides experimenting with alternative program models, the Nation supported a massive early childhood curriculum experiment, Planned Variation. The study was a large-scale attempt (involving 2,000 children in 28 sites) to compare the effects of 11 curricular models (Miller, 1979). All these efforts gave the field the opportunity to grow and to define and redefine itself through experimentation, a positive legacy of the program model strategy.

Further, the positive impact that such programs have had on those involved should not be overlooked. While researchers garnered data to help

the Nation craft policies, countless children and families were well served. Head Start alone has served 10.9 million youngsters since the program's inception in 1965 (Project Head Start, 1989), and experimental non-Head Start programs in large States like New York, California, and Texas boost that number significantly.

On the other hand, the program models approach has not lived up to all its glorious expectations. Program models, by definition, were designed to serve as a plan, an exemplar from which other efforts would flow. The inherent assumption of the "models" approach was that what worked well in one locale would work equally well in another. But the difficulties associated with transporting even effective programs from one locale to another soon became apparent (Goodlad, 1975; Sarason, 1971). Not only were problems encountered because different settings had their own unique cultures, but numerous challenges emerged as programs attempted to move from small to large scale. Golden (1989) points out that not the least of these include: accommodating differences in accountability and equity; maintaining consistency with the larger regulatory and financing systems; and dealing with the risk associated with dramatic and visible failure. Similar concerns have been raised when consideration is given to using small, community-based, and often homogeneous models as the basis for large-system reform (Evans, 1989). In short, how far the benefits of lighthouse programs travel and how much light they actually shed has been seriously questioned (Meade, 1989).

Beyond portability, institutionalizing program models even in their own settings has been a challenge. Always seen as something special, the programs grow up apart from the mainstream and often are not fully incorporated into the life of the institution. Program staff, socialized into the doctrine of the model, retain a commitment to it, but not necessarily to the overarching goals of the host institution. In fact, the intent of the model program is typically to redress some deficiency in the host setting; hence, commitment to the host setting often contradicts the mission of the model.

In addition to the psycho-social dimensions of institutionalization described elsewhere (Smith & Keith, 1971), practical inhibitors plague the process. Often program models do not command consistent and sufficient funding to enable them to reach their full potency. Always worried about garnering the next dollar, those implementing the special efforts expend considerable time and energy sustaining their efforts, rather than improving or disseminating information about them. Unless buttressed by full

financial or ideological commitments, most program models, by their very nature, remain limited in impact.

Learning from the difficulties associated with transporting and institutionalizing models, program planners have suggested several strategies. Converting model "adoption" to "adaptation" has yielded some success. That is, rather than simply adopting the pure model as it was developed, potential implementors are encouraged to adapt it to local setting and need. A variant of this strategy suggests that aiming to transport programs or to adapt them is a mistaken approach. Rather, planners should launch site-specific models with the goal of extracting operating principles or lessons to be shared. The goal is not to replicate a given pattern or even tailor it slightly, but to discern essential elements and principles and disseminate them.

However worthwhile these approaches appear, they fall short of addressing the real problem, particularly in early care and education. Simply creating another program model, no matter how effective, particularly given that the field already knows how to mount successful programs, is not the most efficacious strategy at present. While the program add-on approach (alternatively called muddling through) was functional during a period of limited support, now with the groundswell of commitment to young children and families, a more pervasive and durable systemic strategy is in order. Consequently, the focus needs to shift from program development to system reform. We need to focus on making institutions receptive to the program models we have created. In short, we need to understand how to graft such efforts onto extant institutions so that model programs may be preserved. Moving from a programs to a systems strategy takes what we know and attempts to institutionalize it more widely and more permanently.

Moving from a Particularistic to a Universal Vision

For decades, early care and education has been largely a numbers game. That is, given the large numbers of underserved youngsters, advocates and politicians have focused on increasing the number of slots (that is, the number of children to be served). In some cases, this meant watering down quality, because dollar increases were rarely sufficient to cover both inflation and new slots. In no case, until recently, was anyone concerned with the effects of expansion in all sectors. Each sector operated on its own track, aiming toward what it considered to be a unique destination.

But when train schedules and destinations were compared, it became evident that programs were on the same track, from both ideological and service perspectives. The problem was that no one had bothered to consider the whole system and synchronize services.

To stave off competition, minimize expenditures, and maximize quality, equity, and integrity, strategists during the next decade must shift their focus from supporting any particular program to visioning a whole system, one that includes profit and nonprofit providers, church and government programs, and one that acknowledges the importance of home-based programs and familial care. In short, we need to move from seeing Federal programs in general, or any Federal program in particular, as the totality of early care and education. We need to recognize early care and education for what it is: a complex, highly fragile, yet integrated system that involves parents at home with their own (and others') children, adults at home with others' children, home-based and center-based programs.

We also need to recognize that family day care and center care and education are expanding. Such expansion demands attention to coordination. Out-of-home providers are beginning to acknowledge the need to connect with one another. They recognize that what affects one sector dramatically influences others, making cooperation all the more necessary. Collaborative councils, interagency teams, or intra-agency working agreements are being established to foster cross-agency staff training, common planning for siting new programs, and information and resource sharing. Providers are coming to understand that such creative planning can yield innovative use of limited dollars and result in programs that better meet children's needs and parents' schedules. Collaborative efforts are helping to alleviate some of the field's tensions and inequities and reduce systemic inefficiencies. Schools, meanwhile, are acknowledging their important, but not unique, role as service providers. In some communities, Head Start and child care are planning collaboratively for the implementation of the Family Support Act of 1988. Essentially, the byword is cooperation—looking beyond individual programs or sectors to a more universal and integrated vision, one that affords options for diverse services to flourish.

Such vision is needed not only among programs that provide similar services to comparably aged youngsters but also among early care and education programs and the schools. For decades, critics of early intervention have been concerned about the lack of collaboration between preschools, kindergartens and elementary schools, and the effects of such discontinuity on young children. They have questioned the large investment of dollars in preschool services, given that many children will enter

low-quality schools where there will be little continuity and where the advantages of early intervention programs will be diminished, if not quashed. Because continuity is a legitimate concern, it is being addressed by providers through collaborative entities. And with an additional impetus from major professional organizations who are calling for the establishment of primary units (NASBE, 1988) and focusing attention on implementing high quality programs (Warger, 1988), a more integrated and appropriate array of educational practices should emerge.

Using a more universal vision when considering services to young children also means integrating services more successfully than in the past (Slavin, 1989). One-dimensional programs are not likely to have the effect of multidimensional programs, and meeting children's cognitive needs without attending to their social, emotional, physical, and nutritional needs is shortsighted. To help integrate services more effectively, agencies with entirely different goals are cooperating in planning and service delivery. For example, The Jewish Guild for the Blind has screened the vision of preschoolers in New York City. YMCAs and YWCAs are cooperating with schools to plan and implement before- and after-school programs.

But such worthwhile efforts need support, especially given a policy apparatus that discourages cross-agency, cross-system, and cross-disciplinary collaboration. Stringent regulations that prohibit creative and innovative programming must be removed and replaced with incentives for cooperation. Lessons from one sector must be transmitted to other sectors, so that the best of each may be shared. Such restructuring will not be easy; it will cause agencies that traditionally have been competitive to cooperate, and those who have delivered one service for decades to change. Incorporating lessons from past efforts at change will be essential if we are to alter the paradigm from particularistic to universal thinking.

Moving from a Short-Haul View to a Long-Term Vision

Beyond thinking more systemically and universally, we need to alter the Zeitgeist to acknowledge that early care and education programs are now a permanent part of the social landscape. Unlike decades past, when such services met the needs of a limited segment of the population, programs for young children are needed by increasing numbers of families. With such varied needs and perspectives, we must alter our thinking; rather than devising one or two short-term add-ons or "quick-fix" programs, we must plan for more diverse and permanent efforts. This means we need to

provide options for those who do not elect or need to have their youngsters in care. Opportunities for parenting education, now offered piecemeal throughout the country, should be made available to all families on a voluntary basis. Family leave should be considered an essential policy. Tax credits should be considered as a part of our policy strategy.

Equally important, we must consider the needs of youngsters in care and the needs of the early care and education system, today and tomorrow. We must shore up the infrastructure of early care and education (paralleling the infrastructure of any enduring entity). Long-haul thinking necessitates that we consider the quality of the facilities and transportation that so often are taken for granted. It demands that we improve the recruitment and training of individuals entering the profession. Although barely able to keep pace with current turnover, caregiver and teacher preparation institutions must nevertheless plan for expansion in the field. But before asking teacher preparation institutions to invest in training, the field needs to establish competence levels and specify the essential balance of practical and theoretical elements needed at each level. More flexible inservice training and effective mentoring strategies need to be considered and appropriate compensation must be guaranteed.

Anticipating the inevitable and planning for it characterize moving from short-term to long-haul thinking. But most communities lack integrated data bases that would enable them to anticipate future needs for young children and their families. Securing funds and technical assistance to develop local planning capacities is critical to a codified long-haul vision. Engendering the need for comprehensive policy planning and adequate financing across multiple funding streams is necessary. At the national level, mechanisms for planning and funding that transcend agencies must be set in place. And finally, the recognition that children are important not only to their families but to the Nation must be accompanied by a concomitant commitment to making appropriate investments in their lives.

Not easy, such calls for systemic, universal, and long-haul visioning demand collaboration. Through the 1980s, we have experienced the emergence of new and promising partnerships, the beginnings of a new ethos that stimulates inclusionary thinking. Next-decade strategies need to build on that footing, recognizing commitments to diverse and qualitatively improved systems of service delivery. Above all, next-decade strategies must be coordinated and weighed on a social scale that balances private rights with public responsibility.

Kierkegaard said, "We live our lives forward, but we understand them backward." Looking back at the evolution of America's system of early

care and education, we see a fragmented portrait of confusion and acrimony. Let us use the knowledge and opportunities before us to paint a better picture, one in which excellence, based on quality, equality, and integrity for all children, is in the forefront.

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